

# EU delays re-approval for weedkiller glyphosate

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Campaigners demonstrate in Brussels on May 18, 2016 against the use of weedkiller glyphosate

The EU on Thursday failed to agree on the re-approval of weedkiller glyphosate in Europe amid fresh fears the product could cause cancer.

This is the second time that regulators from the 28 EU members states, in addition to the European Commission, delayed their decision on rolling over the approval for glyphosate amid fierce lobbying from both sides of the issue.

"The Commission has made clear that it would not proceed without a solid qualified majority (QM) of Member States," a spokeswoman for the commission, the EU's executive arm, said in an email.

"Since it was obvious that no qualified majority would have been reached, a vote was not held," the spokeswoman added.

Glyphosate was first used in the 1970s as the active ingredient in the Monsanto herbicide Roundup, which is now one of the world's most popular weedkillers.

The European Commission, the EU's top regulator, recommended that the bloc greenlight glyphosate for another nine years when its current licence ends on June 30, sources close to the matter told AFP.

But critics, led by Greenpeace, point to research from the World Health Organisation that concludes glyphosate may be carcinogenic and are calling for the ingredient's outright ban.

Among major EU member states, France and Austria have expressed opposition to glyphosate, while Germany remains divided on the issue.

French Environment Minister Segolene Royal in a tweet said: "Very good news. More and more countries are following France and refused authorisation".

Complicating the issue, there is a lack of a scientific consensus on the danger of glyphosate.

Last week, a review carried out by pesticide experts from the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization said "glyphosate is unlikely to pose a carcinogenic risk to humans from exposure through the diet."

That appeared to contradict a March 2015 finding from the WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) which said glyphosate "probably" caused cancer.

In a statement, the Monsanto-backed Glyphosate Task Force regretted an "acute politicisation of the regulatory procedure".

"The GTF consider this situation to be discriminatory, disproportionate and wholly unjustified," said Richard Garnett, head of the task force.

The main European farmers' union, Copa-Cogeca, said it regretted that no vote had taken place

Thursday, with secretary general Pekka Pesonen warning that the bloc would be at "a competitive disadvantage" with non-EU countries if glyphosate were to be banned.

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